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China Snap Shots

By Clara Pearl Dyer

THIS is a typical hill country village. The houses of the common people are built of mud bricks. Here and there one may see the home of a wealthier family made of burnt bricks. All the tile roof houses are of brick and stone and the mud houses have plaster or thatch roofs.

IN this particular home there once dwelt a mother, father and five children and they had a room to rent.

What can the mother in such a place do toward elevating her race? All she can do is to bring into the world more little ones to grow up and establish other homes just like this. In fact, the oldest daughter of this family married a man who afterwards became a thief.

And yet it is in just such homes as this that millions of China's women dwell. Tourists who visit the cities see signs of improvement but we who go out into the great country see old China; see the untaught, unreached masses, see the hordes of women whose lives are confined within the four walls of one room.

Yet there are signs of awakening even there. There are some women who are not so adverse to sending their girls to school; more and more the country women are willing to leave their homes and enter a Woman's Training School; yes, and even pay for their food while there, and very occasionally we see out in the country a girl, not in a Christian school, with unbound feet!

HERE is an old lady, no particular old lady, but one characteristic of her class. She is the real force in her home. Her contribution to the industrial work of the world is confined principally to managing her daughter-in-law. Her tongue is her chief weapon and her age her protection.

Contrast with this the picture of the Christian women shown on page ten who go from place to place telling the gospel story to those who have never heard it, or helping those already Christian to a better understanding of the "doctrine."

IN every heathen home there are at least three paper gods and they may be seen in this picture. One is called the kitchen god. He usually is pasted on the wall over the kettle where the food is cooked, but in this home he happens to be over the table. He is the one at the right. On the open door may be seen the gate god. There is a companion to him on the other leaf of the door which does not show in the picture. They are supposed to keep the evil spirits from entering the house and are ugly enough to keep out anything with eyes.

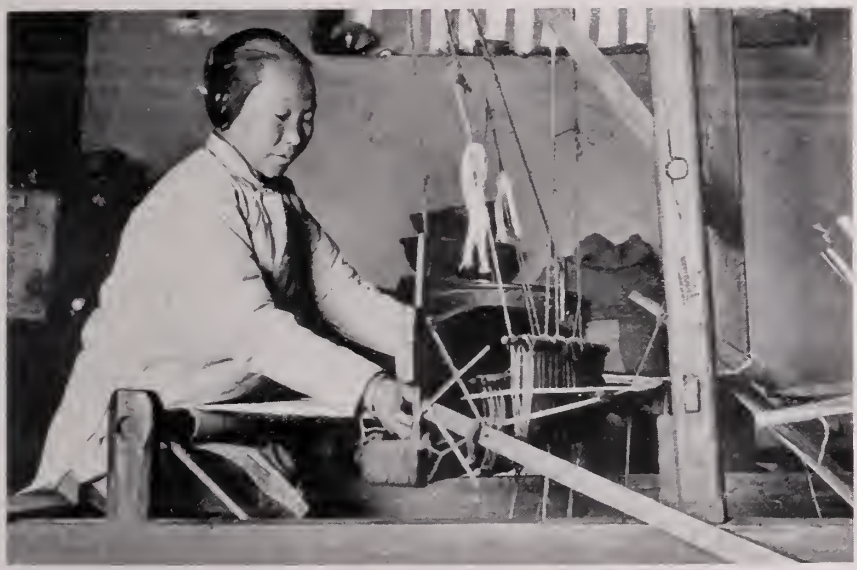
In the middle, over the table, hangs the god of riches. All of these gods must have offerings made to them at certain times of the year. On the table may be seen the cooking utensils, almost the entire outfit for a family of six.

THE Chinaman, in almost every grade of society, refers to his wife as the "inside of the house" or "my inside person." Sometimes he calls her his "fire maker." Here she is. She is stuffing the long stalks of millet into the hole under the kettle wherein is cooked all the family dinner. Generally the younger members of the family have the task of feeding the fire while the older ones look after the cooking.

THIS kitchen is not a private sanctum either. Houses in China are often built in rows completely filling the width of the yard. The only entrance to the houses of the families who may live in the rear is through the kitchen of the house in front. That means that not only people but everything else must pass through the kitchen—produce, household supplies and building materials. It is a common passage and if the rear families happen to own a mule, a donkey or oxen these, too, must go through the kitchen many times a day.

FOR every woman who may be out in the industrial world at work, there are probably a thousand whose time is spent as the women in the picture are spending theirs, namely, sitting on the "k'ang" (the bed of the northern provinces) and sewing. The rolls of bedding are piled up behind them. The brick platform is heated from the fire under the kettle in the adjoining room and the only other heat comes from the charcoal burning in the pan at the edge of the "k'ang."

IN this land where everything is "hand-made," grain also is ground in these primitive mills. Many and many a weary round must the women of the family make ere enough meal is ground for a day's rations. The mill is often in the street but the fact that all the dirt and dust from the road sifts over the grain does not disturb the grinder in the least.



THIS isn't a picture of our grandmother's day but of the very present time in China. In many homes we find just such primitive looms as this. Sometimes it is the grandmother who works it, sometimes the daughter or the daughter-in-law must spend all her spare moments from morning till night in passing the shuttle to and fro on this clumsy loom.

The cloth which is made is narrow, generally very coarse, but possesses the supreme qualification in the eyes of the Chinese, namely, it is very strong. After weaving, much of it is taken to the dyehouse or, more often, is dyed at home, and this accounts for the universal blue worn by the Chinese.

In these days more and more cloth is bought in the stores, but out in the country, where the millions of China live, the looms are to be found in many, many homes.

THE mother of this big family would have a task on her hands in any land, but in China she must meet it without any training, education or help. Her sole end and aim in life is to keep these children supplied with shoes, stockings and clothes. That is the right order in China, too, for the shoes and stockings are nearly all hand-made and wear out faster than the clothes.

THERE is no work which surpasses that done by the native Christian women. They are the Word made Life, and dwelling among the people.

The woman in a white garment is a volunteer worker. She serves as a chaperone for a day school teacher, spends her spare time in teaching these other two young women to read. She is now in a refugee camp for flood sufferers and has a large class of her neighbors there. It shows what one woman can do.

WHAT more convincing proof of the regenerating power of the gospel can be given to non-Christian China than a model family like this.

A Chinese girl looks forward to no other life than to find a mother-in-law and have a home and children of her own. Happy is she and her family of little ones if, before the marriage day, she has had an opportunity for study. The mother of this family was a former school girl in a Christian school. She is now the wife of a preacher.

There are no schools in the village where they live, so the mother has to take care of the house, do the duties of a pastor's wife, and teach the three younger children every day. The two older ones are away in boarding school. She finds time, also, to visit in the homes of the church members and to do all the sewing for her family, which means making the clothes, shoes and stockings for herself, husband and the five children. Isn't it fortunate she does not have to trim any hats?